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January 16, 2006

TO: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
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FROM: Bruce A. Chernof, M.D.
Acting Director of Health Services and Chief Medical Officer

Marvin J. Southard, D.S.W.
Director of Mental Health

SUBJECT: **UPDATE ON THE PSYCHIATRIC OUTREACH TEAM DIVERSION
PROGRAM AND POLICY ISSUE**

This is to provide your Board with an update on the Psychiatric Outreach Team Diversion Program (PDP) which was approved by your Board on July 19, 2005, as a further step to decompress the County's Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES). To date, twelve (12) private hospitals have signed on to participate in this expanded diversion program and to accept patients from the Department of Mental Health (DMH) managed psychiatric outreach teams, when the four Department of Health Services (DHS) PES are at capacity. Other private hospitals have expressed interest to participate in this program and are expected to join this program shortly. The DMH outreach teams have been trained regarding their PDP role. The Medical Alert Center (MAC), which is responsible for directing the DMH teams to the nearest private hospital with capacity to accept a patient, has developed and implemented the necessary operational procedures. MAC has also assisted DMH in orienting the intake staff of the participating private hospitals to PDP requirements and procedures. The first diversion under this program took place on August 12th and to-date over sixty-six patients were diverted to private hospitals when all County PES were at capacity.

The expeditious implementation of this program can be credited to the continuing collaborative working relationships of the two Departments, who expect that this program will have a significant impact on decompressing the PES.

The Departments have been engaged in a discussion to address the question of diversion when all four County Hospital PES and all of the participating private hospitals have reached capacity, or when the four County Hospital PES are at capacity, and the monthly funding allocation for the PDP has been expended. It is possible that either one or both of these scenarios will occur during the current fiscal year.

Given the explicit expectation of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) to control the inflow into the County PES and avert overcrowding, the Departments will implement an emergency diversion program should either of these scenarios occur. This plan includes diversion to all other Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) Act designated private hospitals.

BAC:rs

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors